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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay is to review documents from library literature which base their arguments in favor of academic status for librarians in whole or in part on the concept of academic freedom. Thirteen such items dating from 1956 to 1975 are identified and discussed. The essay is followed by a discussion of the actual meaning of the concept of academic freedom and the issue of tenure for academic librarians. (DMC)

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ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FACULTY STATUS FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS: A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

by

Patricia Ohl Rice

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August 1984

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INTRODUCTION

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is one of several key concepts to have emerged during the history of higher education in America (Altbach & Berdahl, 1981). Defined in various ways by scholars, academic freedom can be most simply understood for the moment as "the intellectual climate established by faculty when they are able to control personnel policies via due process mechanisms and have the job security that comes with tenure" (Slaughter, 1981, p. 73). With remote origins that can be traced back to medieval times, academic freedom came to mid-nineteenth century America by way of the German university and took root here during the period that saw the rise of the American university and the concomitant growth of interest in academic research (Metzger, 1955).

The first formal recognition of academic freedom as a cornerstone of American academic life came in 1915 with the founding of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which issued its landmark "Statement on academic freedom and tenure." This document, revised in 1940 with the cooperation of the Association of American Colleges, describes academic freedom as a tripartite freedom of expression for the professor in research, in the classroom, and in extramural (beyond the confines of the college or university) utterances. The purpose of tenure is to protect this tripartite freedom by preventing the academic institution from dismissing a professor for expressing unpopular ideas. Once tenured, a professor can be dismissed only for "adequate cause" (usually interpreted to mean gross misconduct) or the financial exigency of the institution,

and then only under stringent due process regulations (AAUP, 1967).

To the layperson, academic freedom is reminiscent of the Constitutional First Amendment freedom of expression enjoyed by inhabitants of the United States. In fact, however, the connection between academic freedom and First Amendment freedoms is not one that has often been made in law, at least until recently. American courts are traditionally reluctant to intervene in the internal affairs of academe except insofar as they are called upon to judge matters of procedure and due process (Edwards & Nordin, 1979). Not having a particularly well-defined basis in law, the normative strength of the concept of academic freedom thus derives largely from the collective professorial consciousness. AAUP, as the advocate for that consciousness, is frequently called upon to exercise a watchdog role by investigating cases and by publicly censuring institutions that have infringed upon academic freedom or tenure rights of professors.[1]

Faculty Status for Academic Librarians

Academic librarians in the United States have been expressing their concerns about status for approximately a century (Pourciau, 1975) to such an extent that the literature of librarianship now contains hundreds of articles and several books on the subject.[2] These concerns received official recognition in 1958 when the Association of College and Research Libraries established an ad hoc Committee on Academic Status within its University Libraries Section. In 1969 the committee was elevated from ad hoc status within a section to the status of an ACRL standing committee.

1. Reports of investigations and lists of censured institutions are published regularly in Academe, the official bulletin of the AAUP.

2. One conservative estimate, based on searches of Library Literature, ERIC, DAI, and Huling's (1973) bibliography, places the figure well in excess of three hundred items.

Between 1959 and the early 1970s, ACRL has published, and ALA has adopted, a number of official statements and standards which advocate and delineate faculty status for academic librarians.

The American Association of University Professors has also played a role in this matter. In 1956 it opened its membership to academic librarians and in 1973 endorsed the "Joint statement on faculty status of college and university librarians" prepared in conjunction with ACRL and the Association of American Colleges. Also, AAUP's 1940 "Statement of principles on academic freedom and tenure" has had a strong influence on at least a few librarians writing on the subject.

Most of the arguments in favor of faculty status for academic librarians turn on an analysis of the teaching roles of the librarian in the college or university setting. Other arguments stress the complexity of professional work, the political and practical advantages which accrue to the librarian who can meet faculty members as an equal, and the growing maturity of librarianship as a profession. Counter-arguments deny the librarian's teaching role, say that "equality" creates more problems than it solves, and accord librarianship the status of an occupation, or, at best, an emerging profession.

The purpose of this essay is not to address the above issues, but rather to review those documents from library literature which base their arguments in favor of academic status for librarians in whole or in part on the concept of academic freedom. Thirteen such items have been identified.

THE LITERATURE

1. Tenure in libraries: a statement of principles of intellectual freedom and tenure, adopted by the Council of the American Library Association, June 21, 1946. A.L.A. Bulletin, 1956, 40, 451-453.

ALA adopted "Tenure in libraries" as a statement of principles in 1946. It was meant to apply to all librarians--academic, public, school, special--and speaks of "intellectual" rather than "academic" freedom. Nonetheless, the statement's language and construction clearly indicate its debt to the 1940 AAUP statement.

According to ALA, libraries have been established for the common good. The citizen's freedom of inquiry is in the interest of the common good; hence intellectual freedom is "fundamental for the protection of the rights of the librarian" (p. 451). Librarians must have the freedom to develop library services whereby the citizen can educate himself. Librarians must be free to select books, to present materials on all sides of controversial issues, and to disseminate information on all subjects. Intellectual freedom protects a librarian from the fear of interference or dismissal for unjust political or other reasons. The librarian as citizen should be free from institutional pressures, but has a responsibility to accuracy and restraint in extramural utterances.

Tenure is "an elementary right of any professional group" (p. 452) and specifically guarantees intellectual freedom, merit-based appointments and promotions, economic security, professional practice without fear of interference or dismissal for unjust cause, and the opportunity for highest professional growth. Institutions should indicate in writing any limitations that they are placing on intellectual freedom because of religious or other aims. Probation should be from one to three years unless the institution is following the AAUP seven-year guideline. "During the probationary period, a librarian should be assured the same intellectual freedom as

other members of the professional staff have" (p. 452).

2. Status of college and university librarians. In L. C. Branscomb, The case for faculty status for academic librarians. Chicago: American Library Association, 1970. (Reprinted from College and Research Libraries, 1959, 20, 399-403)

This statement was prepared by the ad hoc Committee on Academic Status and approved by the ACRL Board of Directors (Pourciau, 1975, p. 37). As reasons for granting academic status to librarians, the committee mentions the greater competence required of modern librarians as they cope with the knowledge explosion; the librarian's role as teacher and the library's educational role in the broader society; the maturing of librarianship as a profession and the improving quality of library science education; the (then) shortage of professional librarians; and the librarian's need for academic freedom for collection-building activities.

If granted academic status, the librarian has the obligation to perform research, support professional organizations, and to serve his/her institution. In return for these obligations, the librarian may expect the privileges of "tenure, academic freedom, sabbatical leaves, equitable salaries, holidays, insurance, and retirement" (p. 110).

3. McAnally, A. M. Privileges and obligations of academic status. In L. C. Branscomb, The case for faculty status for academic librarians. Chicago: American Library Association, 1970. (Reprinted from College and Research Libraries, March 1963)

Arthur McAnally was the first chairman of the ad hoc Committee on Academic Status. His paper grew out of the committee's desire to provide a clear statement of principles for librarians who were waging the battle for academic status as well as for those who had recently been granted it and were uncertain as to what they had achieved.

The first half of his paper comprises a seventeen point analysis of faculty status, covering such topics as "the academic viewpoint," profes-

sional qualifications, governance, sabbaticals, teaching, faculty and administrative ranks, and the like. The second half of the paper is devoted to a detailed discussion of what should constitute criteria for promotion and tenure for academic librarians.

In the eleventh of the seventeen points, McAnally says that librarians should have the same privileges of academic freedom as the classroom faculty..." (p. 3). Specifically, librarians must be free to choose library materials; they have a corresponding responsibility to protect faculty "rights to choose" and to provide access to all library materials. In carrying out this protective function, librarians should have the safeguards afforded to classroom faculty (presumably a reference to due process, tenure, and so on, as set forth in the AAUP and ALA statements).

4. Branscomb, L. C. Tenure for professional librarians on appointment at colleges and universities. In L. C. Branscomb, The case for faculty status for academic librarians. Chicago: American Library Association, 1970. (Reprinted from College and Research Libraries, July 1965)

Lewis C. Branscomb, the last chair of the ad hoc committee, makes a much more explicit connection between freedom and tenure in this article, which is clearly derivative from the AAUP and ALA statements. According to Branscomb, librarians need academic-intellectual freedom for activities such as selection, provision of access to controversial materials, shelving arrangements, exhibits, employment of nonconformist staff, preparation of bibliographies on controversial topics, planning of "unorthodox library facilities," defense of library policies, public speaking, classification and subject analyses of materials, the use of "promising but untried" management techniques, and student advisement (p. 65). The specific protections sought are freedom from fear of dismissal or reprisal at the hands of governing authorities or pressure groups. Librarians share with classroom faculty the need for tenure as a guarantee of liberty to carry

on their work, conduct research, and participate in extramural activities. Without such protection, librarians cannot fulfill their obligations to institution and society. Branscomb also mentions the usual caveats against irresponsible public utterances and refers to the protection of academic freedom for untenured librarians (pp. 66-67).

5. Weber, D. C. "Tenure" for librarians in academic institutions. College and Research Libraries, 1966, 27, 99-102.

Weber is less convinced about the appropriateness of tenure for librarians. To the extent that librarians share certain characteristics with professors, they need academic freedom in activities such as selection and dissemination of information, student advisement, the preparation of bibliographies, and so on. To the extent that librarians are administrative officers concerned with running a service organization, keeping business records and supervising other workers, they should not have academic freedom to depart from institutional policies on (for example) book circulation and classification.

Since the primary purpose of a librarian's on-the-job activity is to provide information for the research of other persons, tenure's "overwhelming advantage" is, according to Weber, "foreign to the practice of librarianship" (p. 100). Academic freedom is a "subsidiary (although essential) right of librarians"; their major need is job security so that they can serve the institution. Tenure as a guarantee of academic freedom is therefore not entirely appropriate for librarians and should be replaced with a system of term appointments followed by permanent status, having due process safeguards analogous to those built into the tenure system.

6. Blake, F. M. Tenure for the academic librarian. College and Research Libraries, 1968, 29, 502-504.

Blake sees three areas in which a librarian needs the protection of academic freedom and tenure: (1) protection from fear of pressures that might induce the librarian to practice self-censorship (i.e., by not selecting controversial items); (2) protection in situations in which the librarian disagrees with administration policy; and (3) protection of the librarian's rights to participate in extramural political activities.

7. Massman, V. Considerations regarding faculty status. Mountain-Plains Library Quarterly, 1969, 14, 7-9.

Massman structures the argument in this manner: (1) the librarian's primary concern is freedom of access to information; (2) concern for the freedom to read constitutes a community of interest between professors and librarians; (3) faculty status protects professors by making them eligible for tenure; (4) therefore, librarians also should have faculty status and the protections of the tenure system.

8. Blake, F. M. Faculty status, where it's at. American Libraries, 1970, 1, 767-768.

Fay Blake's 1970 essay echoes the second item in this bibliography by asserting that in order to perform the full range of complex duties associated with academic librarianship, the librarian "needs the same conditions, protections, and responsibilities" as the teaching faculty (p. 768). The faculty status package includes rank, salary, sabbaticals, grants, support staff, peer evaluation, due process, the academic work year, and membership in the institution's governing body. The librarian shares the professor's need to be able to explore the new and controversial and thus has an equal need for academic freedom protected by tenure.

9. McAnally, A. M. Status of the university librarian in the academic community. In Faculty status for academic librarians: a history and policy statements. Chicago: American Library Association, 1975. (Originally published, 1971)

In the course of a lengthy essay recounting the whole history of the academic status movement, McAnally asserts that tenure is an essential corollary to academic freedom, the right to which is one of the major values of faculty status (p. 16). He points out that many librarians have in the past been interested in academic freedom only because they wanted tenure. McAnally sees three aspects to the freedom issue:

> (1) freedom of the library to select, maintain, and provide materials on any subject from any viewpoint, whether or not controversial, unpopular, or seemingly absolutely wrong; (2) the right of students and faculty to have access to these materials and to use them in privacy; (3) protection for the librarian who selects and provides and promotes use of library materials (p. 17).

He believes that Branscomb's presentation of the issue is the best to date "but may need updating."

10. Standards for faculty status for college and university librarians. In Faculty status for academic librarians: a history and policy statements. Chicago: American Library Association, 1975. (Reprinted from College & Research Libraries News, May 1974, pp. 112-113)

The ACRL membership adopted its "Standards for faculty status for college and university librarians" in 1971. The standards assert that librarians need rights and privileges commensurate with their responsibilities of developing library collections, instructing students, and conducting research into the information process (p. 32). Academic freedom (the last of nine standards discussed) is a necessary protection for librarians. "Library resources and the professional judgment of librarians must not be subject to censorship" (p. 33).

11. Statement on faculty status of college and university librarians. In Faculty status for academic librarians: a history and policy statements. Chicago: American Library Association, 1975. (Reprinted from College & Research Libraries News, February 1974, p. 26)

This statement (cited by AAUP as "Joint statement on faculty status of college and university librarians") uses academic freedom as an example of the various ways in which librarians share the concerns of faculty members. Librarians have the responsibility to make information and ideas available so that "teachers may freely teach and students may freely learn" (p. 36). Those who are trustees of knowledge should have freedom to exercise professional judgment "within the library."

12. Model statement of criteria and procedures for appointment, promotion in academic rank, and tenure for college and university librarians. In Faculty status for academic librarians: a history and policy statements. Chicago: American Library Association, 1975. (Reprinted from College & Research Libraries News, September & October 1973, pp. 192-195, 243-247)

In addition to promulgating the standards and joint statement, ACRL also drafted a model statement on appointment and tenure to be used along with the two previous documents by library faculties composing local policy statements. The model statement uses declaration rather than argumentation: "Dismissal will not be used to restrain faculty members in their exercise of academic freedom or other rights of American citizens" (p. 46). Any such action must be reviewed by the institution's committee on academic freedom and tenure (p. 47).

13. Sparks, R. Tenure: solution or problem. Michigan Librarian, 1975, 41, 9-10.

Finally, Rita Sparks sees tenure as both benefit and problem. Tenure can protect the academic freedom of the librarian who is at odds with the administration. But, ironically, tenure (or rather, the fear of not getting it) can also inhibit the free expression of ideas by younger faculty.

DISCUSSION

In spite of the succinct definition of academic freedom given at the beginning of this essay, the actual meaning of the concept is far from clear. Like most normative concepts, academic freedom is difficult to define to the satisfaction of everyone. A recent study by Pincoffs (1972) demonstrates that historians, philosophers, legal scholars, collective bargaining agents, and "ordinary" faculty employ the term with wide and often incompatible variations in meaning. It is evident from the present review of the literature that librarians have made no contributions toward clarifying the concept of academic freedom. Academic freedom is called variously a right, a privilege, and a responsibility (items 1, 5, 3). Freedom is at once the freedom of the professional in the academic setting and the citizen's right to free speech (items 1, 4, 6). It is also the freedom of the student (item 9). Academic freedom appertains to the individual and to the library as an institution (item 9). It is an absolute (item 4), but is subject to limits (items 1, 5). For librarians, at least, it is essential (all items), but subsidiary (item 5). It constitutes freedom from harassment (items 4, 6) but is also the freedom to perform specific duties (all items).

The issue of tenure for academic librarians is no less muddied. Like academic freedom, tenure is variously spoken of as a right, a benefit, and a privilege. It protects against pressures from within and from without the institution. Tenure is and is not entirely appropriate for librarians (item 5). Tenure is the guarantee par excellence of academic freedom, but untenured librarians are also protected (items 1, 4).

That librarians should fail to make a clear distinction between academic freedom on the one hand and the citizen's constitutional rights on the other hand is understandable, for two reasons. First, as noted above, academe itself has not arrived at a consensus on the issue (Pincoffs, 1972). Second, American librarianship as a profession has historically been more deeply concerned with the public library sector than with the academic sector. It is illegal for a publicly supported library to limit types of information or access to information (Berninghausen, 1975, pp. 124-125), whereas private institutions may place religious or other limitations on themselves, as both the AAUP 1940 and the ALA 1946 statements admit. Not too surprisingly, most of the censorship pressures on American libraries have come from groups trying to mold tax-supported public and school libraries according to particular notions of morality. The number of articles in library literature on public and school library censorship must outstrip those on academic status by a factor of ten. ALA's major anti-censorship statements--"Library bill of rights," "Statement on labeling," "The freedom to read," and "Overseas libraries statement"--all address the general concerns of citizenship, not the particular concerns of academe.[3]

One might wonder, nonetheless, that if librarianship as a profession pays such deep hommage to the freedom to read and related rights, why only thirteen out of three hundred-plus documents on

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3. AAUP documentation asserts that the professor is fulfilling his/her obligations to society by teaching and performing research. Academic librarians agree with this general proposition and apply it to themselves. Some academic librarians go a step further and say that the principle of academic freedom entails a responsibility on the part of the librarian to protect the exercise of that right by others, namely, faculty and students (cf. item 9). It is plausible to suppose that the librarian-as-protector notion is a spill-over from the militant anti-censorship attitude prevalent in public and school librarianship.

academic status for librarians address the issue of academic freedom or attempt to incorporate it into their argumentation. Moreover, several of the documents in this bibliography place academic freedom at the end of rather long lists of other arguments--a sort of after-thought, it seems. Certainly, academic freedom's position as ninth or twelfth in a series of points does nothing to enchance its power to convince.

One possible reason for this apparent lack of interest in the subject may be that historically the American college and university library has been less subject to attack than the public library--buffered, as it were, by society's willingness to accord a measure of freedom and autonomy to the academic institution as a whole. This would be somewhat difficult to prove, but a check of Library Literature for the years 1960-80 unearthed only a handful of articles on college library censorship, as compared with hundreds of reported censorship attempts against public and school libraries. For whatever reason, the academic librarian is evidently not often called upon to take a stand and perhaps, therefore, perceives the academic freedom issue as less urgent than other issues raised by the quest for status.[4]

It is also possible that librarians do not speak more about academic freedom because they have not been completely socialized into the academic point of view. After all, most of the librarians in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s who made the faculty status claim were interested in that status precisely because they did not have it. As outsiders, they may have been able to identify some characteristic faculty behaviors such as class-

4. As, for example, the urgency to define teaching in such a way that librarians who are never in a classroom can be called teachers and therefore deserving of faculty status.

room teaching and publishing which are easily observable from the outside. But faculty attitudes and concerns may not be so readily apparent to the librarian-outsider. It takes time and close association with a referent group to assimilate the group's attitudes and learn the group rhetoric.

The failure of librarians to distinguish clearly between academic and intellectual freedom which was noted above is also understandable in the present context. Those librarians who have identified academic freedom as an appropriate faculty concern tend to discuss it in terms familiar to them from their own professional context. They are, in effect, trying to combine the rhetoric of two referent groups.

Finally, it is possible that the very fuzziness of the academic freedom concept as used by academics has stood in the way of its use in argumentation by librarians. It is notoriously difficult to build a plausible argument around poorly defined terms. Belief in the relevance of academic freedom to the status aspirations of academic librarians may be sincere, but sincerity alone does not make for good operational definitions. It is conceivable that librarians fail to make more appeal to academic freedom in their quest for faculty status because they (like many other people) are uncertain as to what the concept entails.

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